THE BEAUMONTS OF BEACON STREET.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

CHAPTER I.

LORD ELLESDEN stepped into a Boston street-car, to go down Washington Street. It may seem an odd place to introduce a young gentleman with such a fine-sounding title, but his being there is easily accounted for.

He had begun the modern Englishman's regulation tour through America, was spending some weeks with a relative who, years before, had married a Bostonian, and this morning he had promised to fulfil a commission for the lady to an acquaintance who, at that hour, was always occupied in his office.

Soon after Ellesden had taken his seat, a violent shower—half rain, half sleet—came up, without the slightest warning, and the vehicle speedily grew uncomfortably crowded. He saw a young lady enter, and, had she been even less distractingly pretty than she was, he would have had to relinquish his place in her favor, as she was brought to a halt directly in front of him.

As she took the seat, she looked up with a bow and a murmur of thanks; she caught a partial view of his face, and said quickly:

"Ah, good-morning—I did not recognize you. I hope your cousin is much better?"

"Oh, she's quite recovered," he answered, wondering how, if he had ever met the pretty creature, he could possibly have forgotten her.

Just then, the departure of a heavy elderly gentleman enabled him to secure the seat next her, hoping that she might make some remark which would quicken his memory and give him a clue to her identity. She was busy pulling off her damp gloves, and went on talking gayly without again glancing in his direction.

"I feel as if I were having an adventure," she said, "and it is so delightful. I shall be well scolded because I did not wait for the carriage; but, naturally, that only adds to the pleasure."

She half turned her head, with a bewildering smile, and he, still busy wondering who she could be and where he could have met her, was unable to manage any rejoinder beyond a commonplace:

"I am afraid you are very wet."

"No; my gloves suffered most. You said your cousin is entirely over her cold? I have been meaning to call—by the way, will she get to the Beaumonts' reception to-day?"

Ellesden's cousin certainly was to be there, as Ellesden knew, for he had promised to be her escort; so he replied, quite enthusiastically:

"Oh, yes, yes; we are both going."

"Then I shall be able to make her my excuses," continued the unknown, depositing her damp gloves in her reticule and drawing out a new pair, which looked as if made for a fairy. "How lucky I had just bought them," she added, laughing. "And at last I shall see that specimen of English nobility whom I have just missed half a dozen times during my fortnight here."

"Ah—oh!" Ellesden heard himself reply, but could get no further.

"I don't like Englishmen, usually," she went on, "and I am prepared especially to dislike this Lord Ellesden. By the by, I ought not to say that to you, since, like most young swells, you affect the heavy English. Bless me, what a rude speech—please forgive it. You see, I know your cousin so well that I forget I have only met you three times."

He perceived the mistake she was laboring under, and began to enjoy the joke in his grave fashion, asking quietly:

"But why are you determined especially to dislike Ellesden?"

"Why? Oh, well, just because I have heard so much about his position and his attainments—culture, I mean—I forgot I am in Boston. Mercy! he reads Sanscrit, has deciphered a new hieroglyph or something equally dreadful, and I can hardly read English. Aren't those reasons enough why I should hate him?"

At that juncture, there was a fresh invasion into the car, though the rain had ceased as suddenly as it began, and Ellesden was forced again to relinquish his seat. "Oh, I get out here," the young lady said, a few moments later. "Be sure you find me in the Beaumont crowd; we'll compare notes in regard to his lordship—only you must promise to let me abuse him. Good-morning."

As she rose, she looked full in his face for the first time; a quick flush spread over her cheeks—a rapid expression of doubt and wonder was succeeded by one of mingled fun and embarrassment.

"Please hurry up!" called the conductor.

Before Ellesden could speak, she was gone. He tried to push forward, in order to help her off the platform, but two stout ladies effectually barred his passage. The car started on; he saw the graceful figure flit round the corner, then he lost her.

A few squares lower down, Ellesden himself descended. He paid his visit in a very dreamy fashion, quite forgot his errand until out of the office, and then, being a shy man, was ashamed to go back.

He found Mrs. Emerson at luncheon, and fortunately a couple of unexpected visitors with her, so she had no opportunity to pin him down to facts, thereby saving his reputation for common sense in her eyes.

He soon made an excuse to leave the table, and sat smoking for a long while in the solitude of his dressing-room, but even when he roused up sufficiently to read an art-pamphlet, the girl's beautiful face haunted him still.

His servant knocked at the door with a message from Mrs. Emerson. She had forgotten that she had promised to look in on her friend, Mrs. Bowyer. There was to be a meeting of one of the numerous societies to which she belonged, and she could not absent herself. But she would spare him the infliction of accompanying her, and would meet him later at the Beaumonts'.

Sufficiently wealthy for comfort, even luxury, priding themselves on their culture, their artistic and scholarly tastes, their mental inheritances generally, and their relationship to numerous distinguished people in New and Old England, the Beaumonts were as charming a family as even the heir of a famous earldom would be likely to meet at home or abroad.

Ellesden had made up his mind to this, when, the previous year, he met them at a noted German spa, to which he had accompanied Mrs. Emerson. A quarter of a century had passed since that lady had set foot in Europe, so Ellesden retained no recollection of her; but the pair speedily became firm allies, and he was delighted to act as her escort over to Germany.

A quiet studious man of eight-and-twenty, who had never been in love—a man who cared nothing for race-horses, and less about politics than was satisfactory to his grandfather. Ellesden himself was rather inclined to regret that only a frail old man's life stood between him and a great title, with its responsibilities though, when they should fall upon him, he was not of a nature to shrink therefrom.

The Beaumonts had been distant relatives of Mrs. Emerson's American husband, and ranked among her closest friends. She had a great admiration for their talents and cultivation, regarding the daughter Adela as the cleverest and most beautiful girl she had ever known, and believing her as warm-hearted as she was lovely and talented. Mrs. Emerson put great enthusiasm into her likings, and, in spite of her tact and common sense, could not claim to be a very acute judge of character.

For a time, Ellesden had undoubtedly been interested in Miss Beaumont; she entered warmly and appreciatively into certain studies which absorbed him, and, student though he may be, no man under thirty can fail to consider a woman's mental claims heightened by the gift of physical beauty.

Late in the autumn, he had come over to America, a trip which he had long proposed to himself, and which received an additional inducement from the warm friendship he had acquired for his relative.

He had spent a short time in Boston, then gone West and South; and, during the last weeks of winter, had returned to the New World Athens.

The slight glamor which had been over his eyes in regard to Miss Beaumont had fled, but he recognized that for the first time he had gone near what people called "falling in love." He could congratulate himself now that he had in no way shown more than a friendly interest, yet life looked different, and he was conscious that some new longing, some vague strong impulse, had wakened in his soul. He did not recognize the fact, but the truth was he had just reached the stage where he was ready to love and feel the need of being loved. A vague disappointment remained in his mind because his second meeting with Miss Beaumont, to which he had looked forward with pleasure, had failed to produce the effect he had anticipated; but it had, and he also conceived the idea that in her character there was the same lack of warmth and spontaneity which to him had become a defect in the almost perfect regularity of her features.

The Beaumonts' drawing-rooms were full when he entered. Unavoidably he was made something of a lion, but not offensively so—neither his hosts nor their set were capable of such vulgarity. Miss Beaumont fully intended to become the future Countess of Montfort, but the most censorious or observant person could not have discovered the slightest design or wish of that nature.

To-day her beauty seemed more inanimate

than usual to Ellesden, and he decided that there was a lack of style rather remarkable in an American girl; but the truth was, he kept comparing her with the bewildering vision that had flitted across his path a few hours previous, and for a second sight of which he vainly sought from one end of the salons to the other.

He had got back near the entrance, and was talking to the host, when he heard his cousin say at his side:

"Here you are—I did not mean to be so late. Look at that girl just coming in. I fancy she is the Western Miss Connelton we've heard so much about lately—handsome, but bad style."

Ellesden, however, scarcely glanced at the showy lady; for, at the instant, so close to them that she might have heard his cousin's words, passed the heroine of his street-car adventure under the wing of an elderly lady as dainty as a Dresden-china figure.

"Who is that?" he half whispered to Mrs. Emerson; but she had already turned back to address Mr. Beaumont.

Ellesden made his way through the rooms again, and presently saw Miss Beaumont at the side of the exquisitely dressed and noticeably elegant unknown.

There were several men hovering about, and the conversation appeared to be general, though the young lady was evidently the chief speaker; and, as he got close, Ellesden could hear that she was giving an amusing account of her late blunder in having mistaken an entire stranger for an acquaintance.

Her face was turned aside so that she did not notice his approach, but Miss Beaumont did, and would have taken him directly away on a pretext of showing him her orchids; but, though rather a slow thinker where social trifles were concerned, Ellesden was quick enough when he had an object in view, and he did not propose to be led off.

Just then, the unknown dropped her handkerchief. Ellesden picked it up; she turned to receive it—his eyes so plainly asked Miss Beaumont for an introduction to the owner of the perfumed square of batiste, that, in spite of herself, that lady was forced to say in her stately fashion:

"Miss Connelton, let me present Lord Ellesden."

The young lady gave a little start as her eyes met his; she bowed, coloring in the most charming fashion, and evidently struggling between embarrassment and a keen sense of the ludicrousness of the situation. As for Ellesden, he stood actually dumfounded. This elegant creature the girl of whom he had heard Miss Beaumont and others speak with a sort of contemptuous pity, as not only "Western," but the daughter of a Cincinnati lager-beer brewer?

The other men moved on; each of the two newly introduced muttered something, neither could have told what. Then Miss Connelton, perceiving a look of faint surprise in Miss Beaumont's face, began to laugh, and, quite at her ease, said, with a delicious mingling of womanly assurance and girlish naiveté:

"Dear me, Lord Ellesden, do I owe you or Mr. Forman my most decorous excuses?" Then, before the gentleman could speak, she continued: "I am laughing at one of my dreadful stupidities, Miss Beaumont. It seems that, when the shower drove me into the street-car, it was Lord Ellesden I mistook for Mr. Forman."

"Oh!" ejaculated Miss Beaumont, with a little well-bred horror.

Ellesden laughed and said pleasantly:

"I trust Mr. Forman will forgive you. I have met him, and so know I may feel flattered by your mistake."

"I have been introduced to such scores of people, during the last two weeks," Miss Connelton went on, still apologetically; but something in Miss Beaumont's expression vexed her into adding, with a glance at Ellesden by no means complimentary: "It was the voice misled me—Mr. Forman will be so English."

Miss Beaumont's attention was claimed at the instant, and she had to leave the pair standing side by side.

"And you don't like the English?" Ellesden said.

"Oh, it was only a certain sort and type I declared my objection to," she retorted, so quickly that her speech would have sounded brusque if her exquisite blushes had not shown that she had to struggle hard to recover from her embarrassment.

Just then, up came the dainty Dresden-china lady, with a "Kate, my dear, we shall have to go."

And, as Miss Connelton was presenting Ellesden to her aunt, Miss Oram, along strayed Mrs. Emerson, with her glass on her nose, and, catching sight of the young lady, exclaimed eagerly:

"And I had no opportunity to thank you. Ellesden stares at me as if he thought I had gone completely mad; but, since you know my tiresome boy—Ellesden, don't look so dazed—please introduce me to this young lady, if she will permit."

So the introduction, including Miss Oram, took place; and, when Mrs. Emerson heard

Miss Connelton's name, all her usage of society could not prevent her giving a little start.

"It is so easy to make mistakes," said that young lady, coolly, with a glance which told Ellesden she had heard his aunt's censorious remark as she entered.

Mrs. Emerson's tact was equal to the occasion, and she rapidly went on to tell why she wished to thank the young beauty. She was an absent-minded elderly body, and so near-sighted that, between her abstractedness and her short sight, she was always meeting with disasters. At Mrs. Bowyer's, she had managed to upset a vase of flowers, and her dress would have been deluged if Miss Connelton had not darted forward and preserved both garment and blossoms from harm.

"I believe we have a letter of introduction to you, from your friend Mrs. Grenville," said Miss Oram.

"Oh, your niece's kindness, this morning, puts us beyond such need," Mrs. Emerson answered. "You will come very soon to see me, I hope."

Miss Connelton was by no means enthusiastic in her reception of the civil wish.

"If you are ready," she said to her aunt, and quite annihilated Ellesden by the carelessness of the parting bow she bestowed on him after a few farewell-words to his cousin.

"That Miss Connelton—I was so surprised," Mrs. Emerson exclaimed, when the pair had passed on. "I had an idea she was so—so—well, what we call Western."

"The loveliest and most thoroughbred-looking girl I have seen in America," Ellesden rejoined, with a warmth he seldom displayed when discussing any young lady. "Lager-beer man's daughter, indeed! If Miss Beaumont did say so, I don't believe it. Why, she's like a fairy-princess."

"Oh!" was all Mrs. Emerson could ejaculate, between astonishment at Ellesden's energy and a sudden fear that certain plans in which she had indulged might be seriously interfered with, if this unwonted enthusiasm were to last.

"Weren't you almost ungracious, my dear?" Miss Oram asked her niece, as their carriage drove off.

"Only indifferent, I think," she answered. "However, Mrs. Emerson seems a nice body, and Lord Ellesden is better than I expected; but I must dislike him, because I vowed to in advance, and I want to get up a character for consistency."

CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Emerson by no means forgot Ellesden's verdict; but, by the time the next morning's breakfast-hour arrived, she had settled matters in a way which perfectly satisfied her.

She was a good kind-hearted woman, but she had never quite forgiven her family for the way they had behaved in regard to her having married an American. Nearly related as she was to earls and dukes, her own family had been poor for their station; so when, twentyfive years before, she met Langdon Emerson, the handsome young attaché to the American Minister at Saint James's, and fell in love with him, she had hoped that his great wealth would atone, in her relatives' eyes, for his fault of country.

They were secretly glad to be rid of a portionless girl without beauty, but made her feel that they considered she had perpetrated a mésalliance. Mr. Emerson felt it too, though he said nothing; but, from the day he landed with his wife in his native land, he never went back to England. When she returned, a few years after his death, the London season was at its height. She did not depend on her relations, but based her social claim on her late husband's position in his own country. He had been Governor, Senator, and was a Member of Cabinet at the last. As he had, besides, left her a large fortune, society was pleased to welcome her, and all the relatives, from the grandest duke downward, discovered that they had been extremely attached to her in her girlish days, and had sorely regretted her long period of expatriation.

Ellesden was the only one of the younger set for whom she conceived any real affection; and when, during their summer weeks in Germany, she grew to believe his attraction toward Adela Beaumont deeper than it was, she could not help thinking that to see the heir to her uncle's earldom follow her example, and marry an American, would be a pleasant bit of vengeance. She was as proud as the rest, in her way; but Miss Beaumont was of excellent family on both sides, cultivated as are few girls even in our generation, and, it seemed to her, a sort of counterpart of Ellesden. She regarded him as an intellectual man, without much impulse, though kind and good, and Adela possessed similar qualities—according to Mrs. Emerson's opinion of her character.

Assuredly, Miss Connelton was very different from what she had expected, but, of course, a mere frivolous butterfly—nothing in her to attract deeply a man like Ellesden, and personally Mrs. Emerson had been pleased. So she could afford to be good-natured, in spite of the shock which the young man's enthusiasm had given her.

"Admit," she said, "that few houses in Lon-

don could have done a thing of the sort better than the Beaumonts yesterday."

"Indeed not," he answered; "the only fault I found was that it was so much like London—stereotyped. The only change was that Miss Connelton—she is my idea of an American lady—a different type from the English, but quite equal to it."

"Yes," Mrs. Emerson answered, innocently; "one could forget her father made beer, and her grandfather—well, I suppose her ancestry does not reach so far."

"Fortunate for her," said Ellesden, as he buttered his toast; "there's no danger of her meeting with what the Montforts must when they go far enough back—a groom who, on a lucky day, helped William the Norman to a drink of water, and was knighted on the battle-field."

"Oh, it's not so bad as that! Anyway, since then have followed centuries of gentlemen and ladies."

"Yes—thanks to the groom. You see, I admire the man who by tact or brains founded a family in old times; for the same reason, I admire the modern man when he earns honestly his wealth and position."

Mrs. Emerson sat silent under the lesson which she was not exactly pleased to receive, while forced to admit its truth.

"Well," she said, presently, "the young lady is a graceful winning little creature—evidently of the butterfly species, you know."

The letters were brought in at the moment, and Ellesden was relieved from the necessity of pronouncing an opinion.

At that very time—at the Beaumont breakfast-table—Miss Connelton's name had come up, and its owner received from Mr. Beaumont the same slighting consideration which Mrs. Emerson had bestowed.

"A frivolous chit—fine eyes—handsome clothes," he pronounced, "then you have said all—eh, Adela?"

But Miss Beaumont was a woman, and, however much she might feel disposed to underrate this brilliant meteor from the Western sky, she saw clearly that there was sufficient effulgence to dazzle the masculine portion of humanity, even in what she believed—as strongly though unconsciously as in her religion—to be the exact centre of the moral and intellectual universe. She paused an instant before answering, then said, slowly and with an uncomfortable remembrance of the expression in Lord Ellesden's eyes when she had presented him to the Western beauty:

"Not quite all, papa; you don't do her justice, I think. She has a brilliancy which might deceive people—especially your sex—into the belief that she possessed actual talent."

"Not face to face with you," Mr. Beaumont answered, accentuating his emphasis on the personal pronoun by the tap he gave against the shell of his boiled egg.

"I think you both underrate her," Mrs. Beaumont observed, as she laid down the review she had been reading. "I have only met Miss Connelton a few times, but she strikes me as a clever girl—very clever. I am not prepossessed. She is not—not—well, of our type of young lady, but I fancy anybody who considered her too frivolous to be dangerous would make a grave mistake."

With these words, she gathered up her letters and departed. The father and daughter sat for an instant in silence, just glancing each toward the other. Both dreaded her intuitions, though, so far as judgment went, they held her opinions of little consequence. Her verdict in affairs of society was accepted by them; they appreciated her to a certain extent, but the two tacitly agreed in thinking that hers would have been an ordinary mind except for their influence.

Her father's doubtful look put Miss Beaumont on her mettle, and, really believing herself a happy cross between Pallas Athene and a society woman, she soon found satisfactory phrases to convince her own mind, as thoroughly as his, that this intruder into the elect circles of Boston could not be dangerous—that is, dangerous to her own prospects where Lord Ellesden was concerned.

Mrs. Emerson would have been scornfully incredulous had anybody suggested that a colder-hearted or more calculatingly-ambitious woman did not exist than Adela Beaumont, yet the charge would have been true.

So far from thinking this, when, in accordance with a previous arrangement, Miss Beaumont made her appearance toward luncheon-time, the widow was so struck by her sweetness and consideration, that she only thought what a wonderful creature Adela must be, since she was always discovering some unexpected excellence in her.

Ellesden did not appear at this informal meal, although his cousin had expected him; but then, he had been unaware that there would be a chance of meeting Miss Beaumont.

Mrs. Emerson let this latter fact be known in her sweet impulsive way, and it served as a balm until an hour later, when the two ladies went out driving, and, near the Common, perceived Miss Connelton walking slowly along, with Lord Ellesden for her companion.

Mrs. Emerson was a woman of resource; she immediately stopped the carriage and said in her softest voice:

"This is delightful—but I always have luck! Now, you must both drive with us. Oh, Miss Connelton, I have not half thanked you. And how is that sweet little aunt?"

The mutual greeting of the four left nothing to be desired; but Miss Connelton would not drive.

"I will bestow Lord Ellesden on you, though," she said, "partly because he has done nothing but quarrel with me, and partly because I am going to make a visit, and the aunt has promised to pick me up as she goes by."

"I am not to be flung about in that fashion," retorted Ellesden, "and I promised your aunt to see you safe to your destination."

Mrs. Emerson knew that another word would be ill-judged; good-byes were exchanged, and she and her companion drove on, though scarcely in as good spirits as before: for the thought in each of their minds was whether Ellesden could have been to call on Miss Connelton, but neither chose to express the wonder.

In fact, the encounter of the pair had been wholly accidental: Ellesden was passing the house just as Miss Oram and her niece descended the steps to enter the carriage. The elder lady had managed to tear her dress, and was forced to go back for repair, and Miss Connelton, rather against her will, had been persuaded to take advantage of the fine day and accept Ellesden's escort, instead of waiting for her aunt.

The two managed to quarrel in less than ten minutes, thanks to Miss Connelton's faculty in that line; and Ellesden, who had never in his life met with anything but sugared acquiescence from young ladies, was fairly bewitched by the new experience of being contradicted and scolded apropos to the first subject of conversation which he offered.

"I may as well tell you at once," said the girl, with a delicious mischievous laugh: "I am not only a socialist, but a red republican. I told you yesterday, without intention, that I was prepared to dislike you—and I must stick to it, because just now I have a fad to set up for consistency. A consistent woman would be an anomaly—and I want to be that, just because I don't know what the word means."

And this showy sort of chatter, which fascinated him, was relieved in the most natural way by graver talk, as they spoke of books and kindred subjects; and she showed that, so far as poetry and prose fiction were concerned, she was quite at home.

"Oh, yes," she said; "frivolous as I am, I can appreciate a good novel or a fine poem; but ask no further. For hieroglyphs, cuneiform what-are-they? and that sort of thing, you must go to the Boston women. I am only a Western savage, you know—and, savage-like, I never forget my promises; so good-bye."

And, arrived at the house where she was expected, she sent him off with scant ceremony, yet somehow left him more delighted with the lack than he often was with other women's deference.

CHAPTER III.

Miss Connelton had come to Boston under auspices which insured attention requisite from the very best people—and, into the bargain, her beauty, wit, and reputation as a great heiress were adjuncts which must have exercised their force in any circle into which she might have been thrown.

As the weeks went on, she certainly achieved a great social success, and, however much people silly or malicious enough to attach consequence to such a matter might wish to believe the story concerning the brewer's vats, its falsity was effectually established by indisputable authority.

So far as Kate Connelton was personally concerned, if the report had been true, she would have felt no mortification thereat; the point of importance in her eyes was the fact that her dead father had been an honorable man—the title of a duke's daughter would no more have consoled her for that lack than the brewer's millions could have done.

The truth was that Miss Connelton's grandfather had gone to Cincinnati when the town was young, and accumulated a large fortune by the rise in value of the land which he had bought. Her father was never in business at all, and a good deal of Kate's childhood and motherless girlhood had been spent in Europe.

Since her father's death, her maternal aunt had lived with her; they had traveled a great deal, and, in spite of a memory from the past which always cast a certain shadow over her mind, Kate Connelton at two-and-twenty was a sufficiently happy girl, much more thoughtful and earnest than she appeared to ordinary observers, and eager to make the best use possible of the great fortune which was now under her absolute control.

When a month had gone by, Ellesden felt as if he had known her for a long while, yet every now and then some new phase of character flashed out which made him doubt whether he knew her at all. But he was under a spell, all

the same, and already began to acknowledge it to himself, though he was forced to admit that the young lady appeared unconscious thereof, and he was sadly uncertain whether she would have cared had she perceived it.

The truth was, Kate had so fully determined that she could never marry, that it was a pleasure to enjoy Ellesden's society without any fear of his making love to her, as she believed the report which was prevalent that the future earl had come over to America on Adela Beaumont's account, and that, if not already engaged to her, he soon would be.

She pitied him somewhat; for her intuition had soon given her a very just idea of Miss Beaumont's character. Then, too, she had known a good deal about the father before she ever saw him; for she was, though she did not choose them to know the fact, connected on her mother's side with a person distantly related to Mrs. Emerson's late husband and a near relation of Mr. Beaumont's, though that gentleman had ignored the man for years, and would scarcely have been grateful to Miss Connelton for any reminder that he existed.

Mrs. Emerson still considered Kate frivolous; but, to Miss Beaumont's indignation, she could not help showing that she liked the girl, though Adela found a little consolation in her friend's oft-repeated declarations that the heiress only amused Ellesden as a sprightly child might—she was all froth and show—no depth of character.

"She is quite clever enough to be dangerous," Mrs. Beaumont repeated several times; but the iteration only made her daughter cling more obstinately to her own and Mrs. Emerson's opinion, and Mr. Beaumont could not for an instant entertain the idea that a mere piece of prettiness would stand any chance with a man like Ellesden when put in comparison with his own Pallas Athene.

During these weeks, Mrs. Emerson, seeing matters by the light which she wished to consider reality, unintentionally aided the father and daughter in their self-deception in regard to Lord Ellesden. When they were all in Germany, Mrs. Emerson had been so convinced that her cousin was seriously attracted by Adela, that, after her return to America, she construed every possible sentence which held a mention of the young lady into something almost equivalent to an open avowal of affection. When he came to America, she believed, as firmly as Adela and her father, that his chief object was to see Miss Beaumont again, and that he would propose to her before his return home.

But the weeks were going rapidly—no ground seemed to be gained—and Mrs. Emerson's "butterfly" was every now and then proving plainly that, between accomplishments and mental strength, she might easily merit Mrs. Beaumont's assertion that she could be "dangerous."

One night, at a musical party, Miss Connelton was persuaded to sing, and her beautiful exquisitely-trained voice so astonished all listeners that there rose a report of her having been educated for the operatic stage, and having only relinquished the idea when sudden wealth flowed in upon her father.

Then Mrs. Emerson and Adela elected to believe music her sole accomplishment; but this delusion was dispelled by circumstances proving that she spoke several languages with a fluency which Miss Beaumont herself could not equal. Then, in her mockery of Ellesden's learned pursuits, one day at Mrs. Emerson's house, she unintentionally showed that in many of his favorite subjects she was nearly as well read as he.

"Why do you always talk as if you never studied?" he inquired, while Miss Beaumont sat by.

"You ask that just because I happen to speak several languages as easily as English. That required no study; we were wandering about Europe when I was a child—any parrot would have learned," she said, laughing. "As for your ologies and wisdom generally, I really know nothing at bottom—it's all pretense. I have a turn for picking up languages as I have for slang."

"You like slang?" Miss Beaumont asked, with a little accent of horror audible in her voice.

"That depends," said Kate; "slang of a certain sort is the present each age makes its successor in the matter of new words. Now I don't like perversions of words—that's bad slang."

"An instance, to show your meaning," said Ellesden.

"Oh, that is easy," she retorted, with her most mischievous smile. "A little while ago you spoke of something as awfully jolly—now the dictionary says that awful means solemn, awe-inspiring, grand."

"We shall have to be on our guard, Lord Ellesden, since we know what a critic we have among us," Miss Beaumont observed, indulging in a polite sneer.

"Oh," rejoined Kate, with perfect good-nature, "you see, I bought half a dozen lexicons when I found I was coming to Boston."

Mrs. Emerson had insisted that, as Miss Connelton's "frothy fun," as she called it, amused Ellesden for the time, it would be wiser for them

to cultivate her, so that they might know exactly what was going on. But, of late, Adela had rebelled more and more at the frequent invitations and the familiar terms on which Kate was getting, and after this conversation she showed so much annoyance that Mrs. Emerson determined to set matters right, if any false hope occupied Miss Connelton's mind.

The wisest people occasionally do foolish things, and, since the amiable widow, though possessing a fair share of sense, could advance no claims to ranking in the superlative, she might be held excusable for the step she took.

She called, one morning, on Kate Connelton; gentle Miss Oram chanced to be out, so there was nothing to hinder her ready tact from leading the conversation toward the ground she desired it to reach, employing as the medium adroit compliments and skillfully-veiled flattery, the motive of which speedily became clear to the quick-witted young woman with whom she had to deal.

"That cousin of mine!" Mrs. Emerson exclaimed, when the turn of conversation made the remark sound quite unpremeditated. "And one may say—oh, those men in general."

"Bless me," rejoined Kate. "What does this outburst mean? How have men generally, and Lord Ellesden in particular, fallen under your displeasure?"

"Oh," cried Mrs. Emerson, with an impatient shrug of her shoulders, "it all grew out of a letter he was reading at breakfast—about Sir Gerald Noble, you know—"

"Never heard of him," cooed Kate, in soft parenthesis.

"Oh—well—he's a relative of Ellesden's. He has been engaged to a charming girl, and breaks off the affair because he chooses to fancy himself in love with a woman of whom his family disapprove—and the other match suited them so entirely."

"But he is the person who is to marry—not his family," responded Kate. "If I were the girl to whom he had been engaged, I should think better of him—even if it were the wedding-day—for telling me frankly he loved somebody else, and so give me time to set him free."

"Well—yes—perhaps," Mrs. Emerson said, in haste to reach what she wanted to say. "The truth is, Gerald is an unconscious flirt, and I told Ellesden he is the same. He was so vexed, we almost quarreled. He vowed that, if he is a flirt, he must be a very unconscious one."

"I think," said Kate, quietly, "that I should thoroughly agree with Lord Ellesden."

"But that, as I said, is just what makes him dangerous," cried Mrs. Emerson, hoping that she could now bestow the lesson and warning she wished to give—but Kate's next words upset the hope.

"Do you mean to Miss Beaumont? I don't know anybody else to whom he seems likely to prove dangerous," she said, with what would have been harsh bluntness save for the delicious and half child-like naiveté of her tone and manner.

Mrs. Emerson could not decide whether this was artlessness or high art, but in either case she proposed to accomplish the errand which had brought her there, and show Miss Connelton that any personal hope would be vain.

"Adela Beaumont is the last girl in the world to allow herself to be deceived by mere banal attentions," Mrs. Emerson answered. "But I do know that, if he were to marry her, it would please his relations—even the old earl. It is so necessary that he should marry; and last summer, in Germany, he was greatly attracted by her—as he is yet, for that matter—the first time he ever was by any woman—the relatives were so afraid he would become a hopelessly confirmed old bachelor."

"Better an American than no wife, eh?" asked Kate, with one of her mischievous smiles.

"Oh, my dear," rejoined her guest, "the Beaumonts are a fine old family—they date back in England to the Earls of Syne, and in this country—"

"To the Mayflower, of course," put in Kate; "I saw one of the chairs in their house—do you know, I counted that it made the two-hundredth Mayflower chair I had seen since I came to Boston. What a cargo! I wonder where the Pilgrims stowed themselves and their Rock—oh, that was here already!"

Mrs. Emerson felt that she was being mocked, still she could not be vexed with the girl somehow, and appreciated her quickness, though she meant to persevere in her design.

"You are so witty—you always make one laugh," she said. "But, indeed, since we have begun to speak plainly, I may admit that I am really very anxious to see a match between Adela and Ellesden. I've been dying for a confidant—and I like you so much, and know I can trust you."

"I like you," Kate replied, cordially. "But what can I do? I can't marry Lord Ellesden to Miss Beaumont."

"No, no! What I meant was, that it would be such a pleasure for me to have someone to whom I can talk freely," Mrs. Emerson hurried on. "Of course, to English titled people, an Amer-

ican is always more or less objectionable—I can own that, since I married one and am a genuine Yankee in heart and feeling. But, as I said, in this case the relatives would not object—though in almost any other they would be furious—indeed, I'm not sure the earl would not do something desperate—cut off the entail—"

"Only it would not be in his power," Kate gently interrupted, rather surprising her visitor by her knowledge.

"Well, well," she went on, "at all events, since Miss Beaumont has blood as well as beauty and brains, the relations would not be offended by his choice of a trans-Atlantic wife."

"Then I hope Lord Ellesden will appreciate that fine combination of b's," cried Kate, laughing; then she added, more gravely: "I do, indeed. Dear Mrs. Emerson, I can be frank, too. I don't want to marry him or his title, and there is no probability of his asking me. So please lay aside all fear of such a catastrophe, if that is what you have been dreading—my destiny in life is quite settled, I assure you."

It was embarrassing to perceive that she had been so completely seen through, and Mrs. Emerson fully realized that she had done a foolish thing, yet she could not feel sorry for having done it, so inclined was she to trust Kate Connelton's sincerity and honesty, though quite aware that the Beaumonts, or indeed most people, would have thought she was running a great risk.

A few days later, the three young people again met at Mrs. Emerson's house, and Miss Beaumont, in the hope of taking the conversation beyond Kate's limits, spoke of some humorous English verses which Lord Ellesden had, during the previous summer, turned into Greek for her amusement, and insisted on his writing them out again, as she had lost her copy.

There was a difference between the two whether one verse was the same as originally written, and, in the midst of the discussion, Miss Beaumont turned to Kate, saying apologetically:

"I'm afraid we forgot this cannot interest you."

"Oh, I don't much mind," Miss Connelton replied, as she took the paper from the table and glanced over it.

"Odd characters, aren't they?" said Miss Beaumont, with a suave air of patronage.

"What was it Mrs. Browning said about lady's Greek—written without accents?" cried Miss Connelton, merrily. "Lord Ellesden, yours is about as bad!"

She asked for his pencil, remedied two omissions, and, while Miss Beaumont stared in wrath, and Ellesden in delighted surprise, intercalated an entire line which was a decided improvement on his.

"Convicted at last even of knowing Greek!" his lordship exclaimed, while Adela fairly shivered with impotent rage. In her whole life, she had never been so angry—never hated a human being so intensely as she did this girl.

They were interrupted by the opening of the door. Mrs. Emerson came in, saying:

"Miss Connelton, your aunt has sent the carriage for you, and this note—in great haste, your footman says."

Kate opened the billet, read it, and grew very pale.

"No bad news, I hope?" Mrs. Emerson asked, while Ellesden watched the sweet troubled face with an earnest sympathy which roused Adela's rage to a higher pitch.

"No, no," Kate answered; "only some business which must be attended to at once."

As she spoke, she threw the note into the fire, hastily made her adieu to Adela, took Ellesden's proffered arm, and was followed into the hall by Mrs. Emerson.

As the door closed behind them, Adela Beaumont sprang forward and seized the paper which had caught on the upper bar of the grate, and, though a little scorched, was easily decipherable.

She read the page, while her beautiful face grew actually ugly from its expression of malicious triumph.

"Ah, Miss Connelton," she muttered, as she hid the note in her dress-pocket, "sometime I may surprise you as much as you did me with your Greek—and before long, too."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

MY SISTER'S HUSBAND.

BY ELLA RODMAN CHURCH.

"GWENDOLINE," said my sister Rosalie, from the depths of the trunk she was packing in hot haste, as she generally did everything, "I want you to promise that, if anything should happen to me—if I should die—you will marry Max. I cannot have those children running wild, or brought up by anyone, and you will naturally make the best mother for them. Promise me, Gwendoline."

"Of course I will," was my weak response, "if you wish it."

It struck me, at the time, that I might better have said "If Max wishes it," and, best of all, have thought if I wished it myself; but the suddenness of the thing quite took my breath away.

My sister had been ordered off with her babies, the youngest of whom was ailing, to the seashore, whither her beloved Max, owing to the prior claims of the tyrant, business, could not go. Hence the hasty summons to me, to come and take care of him and see to things generally.

I was quite willing to take care of Max, to the best of my ability; but marrying him was another matter, and the idea was thrust upon me so suddenly that I had not even had a chance to tell Rosalie about Harry Royce.

Rosalie was three years my junior, and, ever since I could remember, she had been one of the world's favorites. It had always been my lot to give up to her. Her very name was a passport in itself, and predisposed people to love her. She laughed easily, and was constantly smiling; with the public, this always passes for amiability. Then she had a great deal of showy prettiness: her dark-chestnut hair curled naturally, and her color recalled her pet name; and she had white teeth and dimples. What more would you?

Rosalie was not inconveniently troubled with deep feelings, and never took things to heart; when she was married, Aunt Zilla said, prophetically, as she threw a slipper after the departing carriage: "If Max Asten should lose Rosalie, he would lose everything—his grief would unfit him for business or the ordinary duties of life, and lay him, after a little time, in a premature grave; but, if Rosalie lost Max, she would mourn him violently at first, then rally, and marry again within two years."

I had often thought of this judgment, since; and, the more I thought of it, the truer I felt it to be. And now Rosalie wanted me to marry Max, "if anything happened to her." Catch me, I thought, making any such provision as that, if he were my husband.

It was not at all a pleasant idea, this taking the "second place," although I had always had it, except with Aunt Zilla. Dear Aunt Zilla! It was to her care we were consigned when we were little wee things, fatherless and motherless. Our schooldays and young girlhood had passed quietly enough, in the little inland village where our aunt lived. She was a little strict, to be sure, but very kind, and I always loved her tenderly.

Love generally wins love, and I knew that I had found the soft place beneath Aunt Zilla's armor; while Rosalie, with all her fascination, never penetrated under the surface. I doubt if she ever knew this; she had such a happy way of taking it for granted that people always gave her their best.

As to Max, I might, perhaps, have laid claim to him by the law of nations, as first discoverer; for, on the evening when he was imported from the city to grace Belle Hazard's "sociable," Rosalie, the ornament to society, was laid up with a bad cold, and I went, without the drawback of her radiant presence, and looked my very best.

A grave and dignified young man, with glasses, who was introduced to me as "Mr. Asten, from Philadelphia," did not appear to find me at all disagreeable to talk to, or rather to let me talk to him, for he said very little, and I thought he must be a professor, at least, but discovered afterward that he was most prosaically "in the iron-business."

I enjoyed that evening wonderfully, and heard a number of flattering speeches from various sources. But Mr. Asten escorted me home, and requested permission to call before his return to the city. He had run away, he said, for a very short vacation—the Hazards being distant connections.

The next day, he called. It was when I was in the kitchen, not "eating bread and honey," but doing over some preserves that had "worked." I was heated, tired, and cross; and

thought how provoking it was that a city visitor should happen to come just then.

Rosalie, it seems, was dozing in a dim corner of the parlor, where a broad comfortable sofa gave a mute invitation to idlers; and she made a very pretty vision, with her rich tumbled hair, that always had a picturesque knack of coming down just at the right time and in the right way, and a shawl of rose-colored zephyr, belonging to me, thrown carelessly over her.

When I finally entered the room, after a hasty toilet, with the uncomfortable feeling that I was at anything but my best, I saw that I was already forgotten. It was Rosalie, not Gwendoline, that Mr. Asten came to see, after that. It was but a very short time before he was "Max" to Rosalie, and she looked gleefully forward to her escape from the dullness of Mariondale.

Aunt Zilla laughed a little at me, in a good-natured way, and asked me if I could not do better, when I went out, than to bring home a lover for my sister; but I took it quite philosophically, and entered into Rosalie's preparations with genuine interest. Of Max, I saw very little; and I did not, somehow, "get on" with him, even as a prospective brother-in-law. So I rather fell into the habit of tacitly avoiding him.

I think that, after our first meeting, Max and I scarcely exchanged half a dozen sentences; he seldom took his eyes from Rosalie, and listened intently to her most trifling words. Aunt Zilla was certainly right: the fountains of his life would be broken up with the loss of his wife; for those who carry least weight often appear to be most sorely missed.

Three years after Rosalie left us, I had begun to feel that there were pleasures in the world, within my reach.

Aunt Zilla always declared that she found Harry for me, just as I found Max for Rosalie; and that the young gentleman paid her exclusive attention, until I appeared upon the scene. It was certainly true, and the way it happened was this:

Auntie had gone to see about some law-business, in the next town, which took her to the office of Mr. Royce, senior; and, papa not being at home, Master Harry officiated. Before long, however, his client was so overcome with the heat, for it was a warm day and she had been going about a good deal, that she nearly fainted, and Harry was so kind and attentive that Aunt Zilla's heart was quite won.

He conducted her safely to the depot, and, when he came to Mariondale, soon after, with some papers for her to sign, he admired the place, and our cottage in particular, so much, that auntie could not do less than invite him to come again.

His visits never seemed to be complete in themselves, but each one was inextricably linked with another: he would speak of a book, and insist upon bringing it, or he would borrow one of ours, and then he must, of course, return it, or he would be taken with an intense desire to come to one of our mild public entertainments and invite us to accompany him, until he finally came, in the most unblushing manner, without any excuse at all.

At this point, the summons from Rosalie arrived. The evening before I left Mariondale, Harry Royce persuaded me that it would add incalculably to his happiness and my safety, to promise to marry him in the autumn. He appeared to think that, without this talisman, there was danger of my being speedily appropriated in the great city, just as though I had ever suffered from an embarrassment of riches in the way of lovers.

It was pleasant, nevertheless, to have him think so.

And this brings me to the July afternoon and my promise to Rosalie.

Having once said yes, I could not summon courage to say no; and, after all, it was not at all probable that I would be called upon to fulfil it; it was so very unlikely that Rosalie would be taken away.

The babies, whose care was to devolve upon me in the case of their being motherless, were boys, and aged respectively one and two years; and, although I was really fond of them, in spite of their being a trifle cross, I had never coveted the entire possession of them. Father and mother adored them as the most wonderful things in creation, and they were sadly spoiled in consequence.

"Just sew this, will you, Gwennie?" Rosalie said, as she turned over the piles of clothing, or, "Put a stitch there." Thus, one article after another was flung to me for repairs, tired and warm as I was, until I could no longer see to work by the fading light.

There was no reason whatever why so many things should need sewing at the last moment, except that it was just Rosalie's way. It was just her way, too, to pour out things upon me as she did, without waiting to ask of my feelings in the matter, or how I might be situated. I think she had quite settled, in her own mind, that I was always to be a convenience for her needs.

She might be away "two, four, or six weeks,"

she said; "it would depend upon Robbie, poor little fellow: if he grew strong as speedily as she hoped he would, she should be back in a fortnight; for whatever would become of Max without her was more than she could tell."

I tried to suggest that the incapable savage, in whose hands he was to be left during her desertion, might possibly manage to keep up his valuable existence; but Rosalie only said, with a superior smile: "Of course, you will do the best you can." And then she enumerated so many accidents and neglects to which Max would be liable, with so many different remedies for each attack, that it was enough to unsettle any ordinary mind; and, if she had only boxed him up safely in a glass case and put the key in her pocket, I should have been infinitely relieved.

"Remember," was Rosalie's last whisper, "if anything should happen to me, you are to marry Max."

My face burned uncomfortably, as I fancied that I detected a gleam of intelligence behind my brother-in-law's glasses: she had probably schooled him, too, then, to swallow this unpalatable dose, should the necessity arise. I found myself wondering which of us would most deserve pity.

The next morning, it was terribly hot and close. As sunstroke had seemed to be one of Rosalie's pet fears for Max, I took his hat, "unbeknownst to him," as Bridget would say, and lined it with a layer of grape-leaves, carefully stitched in. Before using them, however, I washed and wiped each individual leaf, for fear of parasites; and, just as I was finishing my task, Max's voice, in haste and perplexity, came up the stairs. "Had I seen his hat?" he cried.

"Yes," I stammered: "here it is." And I advanced to meet him.

He glanced at the unwonted adornment inside, and then he glanced at me. He looked as if he doubted my sanity.

"It is so warm," I suggested, "and you may get a sunstroke."

He put the hat on his head, as if to try it, then took it off again, and quietly disengaged the leaves. The crown, he said, was perforated with airholes, which answered the same purpose.

"At least," I called after his retreating coat-tails, "you will take my sun-umbrella? Promise me that."

He hesitated a moment, then took it. I had certainly heard him say, or heard my sister say, that he had no umbrella. Rosalie had probably lost her own and taken his with her, and it seemed quite dreadful for him to go without one on such a day as this.

Late in the afternoon, Max returned, umbrellaless.

"Did you not take my umbrella after all?" I asked.

He stood a moment, evidently groping in the halls of memory for said umbrella. Finally came the admission that he had taken it and left it at the office.

"Mine is there too," he added, as though it might be a comfort for me to know that it was not alone.

"Why did you take mine, then?" said I, in amazement. "You did not tell me that you had one."

"I thought you knew it," replied my charge, taking refuge in a cigar.

What should I do with this sort of a man? I said to myself, as I returned to my window and palm-leaf fan. He was so impracticable and so much afraid of his words. Rosalie had always declared that there was a great deal in him; but, so far as I could see, it did not come to the surface.

Summer, in the city, is an unnatural sort of season. The rumbling wagons seem to go through one's brain, the street-odors are not suggestive of the Vale of Cashmere, the glare from brick houses and pavements is maddening, and existence is at best a matter of endurance. I looked back regretfully to the embowered dwellings of Mariondale and wished that my youngest nephew would "pick up" as fast as possible. I had only Harry's letters to live upon, and they were—just what such letters ought to be.

Max had brought home my umbrella. He laughed a little, as he placed it beside me.

"You see, Gwennie," he said, "I'm not used to being taken care of in this way."

I started, as he spoke. He seldom called me anything; and now, as he pronounced my name, it had a very soft sound.

"Not used to being taken care of?" I repeated. "Why, Rosalie talked as if that were the business of her life, and gave me charges innumerable on the subject."

He smiled—a little sadly, I thought—and I wondered if, in this, as in so many other things, my sister talked without acting.

"Are you fond of reading?" continued my brother-in-law. "Reading aloud, I mean." And, thrusting a book into my hands, he lazily extended himself on the sofa.

It was Tennyson's "Elaine," about the last thing I should have expected Max to fancy. But I had always passionately admired it, and I read it now "con amore."

"You have a very sweet voice," said my brother-in-law, approvingly; "it is so soothing."

I was not sure, but I thought he had been asleep.

"Now, read to me," I said, resolved that he should do his duty.

He opened his half-closed eyes quite wide, at this.

"I'll say something for you, instead," he replied, very much like a schoolboy; and then repeated, from memory, the "Sleeping Palace" and the "Vision of Sir Lamfal."

Afterward, he actually roused himself, and fanned me when I complained of the heat. I went to my room, that night, wondering if this were really Max or someone else. I began to think that there was something in him, after all.

I could not understand, though, why he had always treated me with such strange coldness; and, as one thing after another recurred to me while lying awake, I remembered distinctly a little incident that gave me a strange feeling at the time. It was soon after Rosalie's marriage, and I was spending a few days with her in the city. Max and I happened to be alone. He was turning over the leaves of a book, and I drew near him to look at an illustration of which he spoke. We stood quite close together, my shoulder almost touching him; but I thought only of the picture, until Max, as if suddenly recollecting himself, started back a step or two, leaving the book in my hands.

What did it mean? I thought then, and had occasionally thought since. Was I really an object of personal dislike to him?

I had always admired my brother-in-law's appearance, except for a certain expression of sleepy indifference, which seemed rather to grow upon him. But, the next evening, he looked quite awake, as he brought me Longfellow's "Golden Legend."

"It suits your voice," he said; and I read until I was quite hoarse.

Then he repeated nearly all my favorite gems, and I listened, entranced, to his deep sensitive tones.

"You are very unlike Rosalie," he said, presently. "She does not care to hear poetry—it bores her."

I knew that I was unlike Rosalie. But she was certainly a very unwise woman, I thought, not to enter into her husband's taste, instead of leaving him to the mercy of the first coquette who might feel like amusing herself with him.

Day by day, Max grew more attentive to me. I was in a strange tumultuous state. I wanted Harry, I wanted Aunt Zilla, I wanted to go away; but I had promised to stay and take care of Max, and, worse than that, I had promised to marry him. I was sure, too, that he knew this, and the thought made me tingle all over.

Rosalie's letters did not come so frequently as might have been expected, and they were rather short and unsatisfactory when they did come. She was a miserable correspondent, and would not exert herself in that way for anyone. Robbie did not seem to improve, and the time of their return was very uncertain.

Those soft summer nights, in the dim parlor, after it became too dark to read, were strangely unreal and different from anything I had pictured; but I was getting better acquainted with Max, and felt that I had never half appreciated him.

"Why is it," he asked, as he drew me down beside him on the sofa, "that you have always avoided me so, Gwennie? Do you really dislike me?"

"I have not avoided you," I replied, in astonishment; "it is you who have avoided me."

"We seem to have lived with a paper wall between us," he continued; "shall we tear it down?"

I trembled a little, and wondered what was coming. Max, the silent, was getting really eloquent.

"You have been a terrible disappointment to me, Gwennie. You appeared to like me, at first. What changed you so?"

"Nothing changed me," said I, somewhat bitterly, "except the presence of Rosalie. You 'saw young Clara's face more fair,' and soon forgot any passing impression I might have made. But why talk of this? I have no broken heart to reproach you with, for I am soon to be happily married."

"You made a promise to your sister," whispered Max.

"Not willingly," I said, indignant at his knowing and reminding me of it. "It was extorted from me by the force of circumstances. Besides, I should, in all human probability, have no opportunity of keeping it, even if I desired it. Rosalie is not out of health, but Robbie."

"Rosalie has heart-disease," replied her husband; "did she not tell you this? She knows that she may die at any moment—and I willingly made the promise that was 'extorted' from you."

I was resolved to go now—it seemed quite time; but Max held my hand tightly, as he went on:

"I have always loved you, Gwennie. Rosalie at first dazzled me, and I mistook my admiration for a warmer feeling. Attentions meant for you were appropriated by her, and I suddenly

found that I was too far committed to retreat with honor."

I wondered if I were two different persons. For the moment, the tones of my companion's voice were sweeter in my ears than Harry's, and I could have cried for the paradise from which I was shut out. What might not have been, but for Rosalie's vanity?

"You probably did not notice it," he continued, "but, one day, Gwennie, years ago, you stood close beside me, looking at a picture. It maddened me to think that, in spite of your nearness, you were yet so far—and I stepped back from you abruptly."

Not for worlds would I have told him how well I remembered it, and how many other things were now explained.

"I shall leave you, Max," I cried; "I cannot stay in this house any longer."

He raised my hand to his lips, and said very quietly: "Go to bed now, and think no more of what I have told you. You have nothing to fear from me, and you cannot leave me. What reason would you give?"

True enough, the world always demands a reason for a woman's movement. What could I say to Rosalie? But my white elephant was a dreadful responsibility.

A telegram came, one day, from Max. I tore it open. I read it wildly. The words danced before my eyes, and I fell on the floor in a dead faint.

"Come at once—wife very ill," ran the message.

I knew that she was dead; and then everything was a blank for two dreadful weeks.

When I awoke to consciousness, dear Aunt Zilla was there, taking care of me and the wailing child; for little Robbie, too, was gone. My first thought was: "Now I have got to marry Max." And I turned wearily on the pillow and cried.

Then Harry gazed reproachfully down upon me; Max held up his motherless boy; all was confusion and half reality, when—

Rosalie's voice, from some far-off place, sounded reproachfully in my ears: "I don't believe you have heard half of what I was saying."

I could not deny that I had been asleep; but I tried to rally in good order:

"Yes, I did. You wanted me to promise that I would marry Max, if anything happened to you."

"Yes," replied Rosalie, "for the children's sake; but you did not tell me whether you would or not. The first thing I know, you had dropped asleep."

My sister spoke in an injured tone; but I answered demurely:

"I cannot marry Max, for I have promised Harry."

And then, of course, who was "Harry"? So I had to tell my story.

Rosalie forgot to congratulate me. She said, instead, as she wrathfully folded a garment:

"It does seem to me that I never set my heart particularly on a thing, but I am sure to be disappointed."

THE HOUSE IN BOWLING-GREEN.

BY EDGAR FAWCETT, AUTHOR OF "A GENTLEMAN OF LEISURE," ETC

CHAPTER I.

BETWEEN sixty and seventy years ago, there was hardly a single citizen of New York who could account himself more prosperously positioned than Mr. Paul Van Duzer. His low broad brick mansion, with its slender iron railings, its white arched doorway, and its salient wooden dormer-windows, occupied one corner of a certain street which opened directly upon the breezy amplitude of Bowling-Green. Many a summer evening, Paul Van Duzer would sit at the windows of his "parlor"—such a bit of modern nomenclature as a "drawing-room" was quite unknown then—and feel the fresh breezes blow across the Battery from the bay. Mr. Van Duzer did not approve of people summering out of town. His father, who had been a friend of Washington and had fought with distinction in three or four of the Revolutionary battles, had considered New York quite a good and pleasant enough spot for spending both the summer and winter.

Perhaps, in many ways, New York was a pleasanter place at that time than it is now. Fifth Avenue, with its brown-stone smartness and opulence, was unknown; in its place was a mere rural highroad, striking northward from Washington Square. The commercial bustle of Broadway was yet a future development. The city itself would have looked, in any trustworthy map drawn of it, but a small invasion of clustered streets at the edge of the Manhattan Island which it now more than covers. Socially speaking, too, it was a small enough town, with only a few "leading" citizens for its paragons and representatives; and doubtless the chief of even this select body was Mr. Paul Van Duzer.

A good many of his friends might have admitted to you that he was a hard man. But then, a certain amount of hardness was expected of a person so massively and solidly reputable. More than once, of a Sunday morning, he had been pointed out to strangers with pride, as he walked to or from church with Mrs. Van Duzer on his arm, and one daughter at the latter lady's side, while a son and another daughter decorously brought up the rear.

"He comes of our real old Dutch stock," people would say of him; and perhaps, in different cases and according to different degrees and phases of veneration, they would add: "Just observe how finely he carries that large figure of his. He is fiftyfour, but I don't believe anyone would take him for over fortyfour. Those are his three children. The taller of the two girls is Agnes; you see, she has her mother's dark hair and eyes, but a much gentler expression than Mrs. Van Duzer ever thought of wearing. Rhoda is the younger sister, with the wavy blonde hair and the arch roguish sort of mouth. She's the life of the family, is Rhoda; but her parents do not believe in too much levity among young people, and Rhoda has quite often to be reprimanded for her excess of gayety. That seventeen-year-old boy, with the trim shape and clear-cut face, is Ogden Van Duzer, the only boy of the family. He will soon enter into the mercantile office of his father. Mr. Van Duzer is in the West India trade, you know, and has amassed from it already a fine fortune, though he inherited at least fifty thousand dollars when old General Van Duzer died. He does not believe in sending young gentlemen to college, so that Ogden will receive a good plain school-education and nothing more."

There was a number of other points on which Paul Van Duzer held most decided opinions. Regarding these, he had made up his mind so thoroughly that to move his Dutch obstinacy would have been like seeking to dislocate Staten Island from its sea-bed. He had married a woman whose entire congeniality with him in almost every particular was easily evident. Mrs. Van Duzer had been a Miss Van Vechten before her marriage, and, though handsome after a somewhat austere type, she had won no suitors until her present husband sought her hand. Then she readily acquiesced, and proudly declared that she had found the one man in her native city whose wife she could ever dream of becoming. The world declared it a most perfect union. They had brought up their three children with a mixture of ideas that were aristocratic and ascetic. The house in Bowling-Green was rigidly exclusive; to pass its threshold and be on terms of intimacy with any of its inmates, you must show at all times the most flawless credentials. Now that Agnes was twenty and Rhoda only about a year her junior, the girls

were permitted to "entertain" in a quiet and solemnly subdued way. But their list of acquaintances underwent the most careful scrutiny on the part of their parents. Both Mr. and Mrs. Van Duzer had a horror of "new people," which they endeavored to make their daughters warmly share. On several occasions. Rhoda had shown signs of rebellion and had sought to cultivate friendship with schoolmates of her own sex who were declared objectionable simply because their names had no familiar patrician sound. As for male acquaintances, these were still more jealously watched. The Messrs. Van Twiller, Ten Eyck, Stuyvesant, Van Schuylkill, and a few other young scions of irreproachably Knickerbocker stock, were always welcome if they "dropped in" of an evening. The matrimonial opportunities of both the girls were considered most inflexibly to lie in this and in no other direction. A prince of the blood would probably have been thought quite unsatisfactory as a son-in-law, by either Mr. Van Duzer or his wife. They detested foreigners with that provincial distrust which was a result of their early restricted education. They had neither of them ever been abroad, and neither ever expected to go. London was for them a nest of supercilious "Britishers," and Paris a gilded den of iniquity. America was the only country on the globe worth living in, and New York its most delectable metropolis. They sometimes went South, where they had Virginia relations whom they held in the highest respect. These visits were the great events of their placid lives. Mrs. Van Duzer would talk for months afterward of the magnificent hospitality which they had received from the Prestons, the Pinckneys, or the Randolphs. They considered that, next to being a Knickerbocker, dwelling in a sleepy brick edifice on Bowling-Green, there was nothing so genuinely fine as to be a Southern planter, surrounded by his obedient servants and dispensing lavish and almost regal entertainment.

Everything in the Van Duzer household was on so severely economical a plan, that its presiding powers must have been penetrated by a sense of its asceticism whenever they returned from these periodical trips to Virginia. But no modification ever took place in the methodical rigor with which their own household-affairs were managed. Perhaps they secretly held those Southern kindred, with their stables full of blooded horses and their retinue of obsequious servants, to be wholly undesirable except as a picturesque variation upon their own sober and homespun experience.

CHAPTER II.

Until the last visit which they had made South, Mr. and Mrs. Van Duzer had left their daughters in the charge of a grim and exceedingly straitlaced old governess, whose power of discipline was unrivaled and whose realization on all subjects connected with propriety was sweepingly inclusive. But Miss Cobb had been dead these three or four years, and, when it became time for the next visit South, Agnes herself was left as temporary head of the family.

This was a great step for her parents to take. Agnes, it was true, had been so admirably reared, and represented so comprehensively all that was duteous and conventional, as to make even one look into her serene maidenly face a recognition of her trustworthiness. But still, it was argued, her age barely passed twenty; and twenty was perilously young for a position at once undefended and responsible.

"Well, they're really going to leave us, Agnes," said her sister Rhoda, one afternoon. "Father's at last made up his mind, though I think mother was willing enough a day or two ago."

Agnes smiled, in her gentle and slightly pensive way.

"I can't see how there could be the least danger, Rhoda," she answered: "can you? Mother has simply to give me the keys of the closets, and to tell our three servants that they must obey my orders."

"And shall you be authorized, I wonder, to box Ogden's ears just as father does, whenever he displeases you?"

"Ogden never displeases me," said Agnes, with a little shake of the head. "And oh, Rhoda, do you know I think it is so dreadful for father ever to strike him. I wish I dared tell father how dreadful I think it is."

"I don't believe you ever killed a mosquito in your life," said Rhoda, throwing an arm about Agnes's neck and putting her rose-tinted cheek against her sister's paler one: "you'd merely brush it away and forgive it, even when it was biting you horribly. You're a saint. Saint Agnes—how pretty it sounds! There was one of that name—wasn't there?"

"Oh, hush, Rhoda; please hush, dear. You know how it annoys mother to have you talk in that careless way."

Rhoda dropped her lucent blue eyes for an instant.

"I'm beginning to think there are quite too many things that annoy mother, and father also," she murmured.

The color died from Agnes's face. She had

always thought her sister rather daring than otherwise; but there was a temerity in this last speech that struck her as absolutely audacious. A moment afterward, however, the younger girl continued, with lowered voice and a furtive glance toward the door of the room they just then occupied:

"Now, Agnes, you know as well as I do, dear, that we have been brought up in a fearfully strict style. I believe there are not two girls in New York who have had to obey as many rules or to move inside of closer bounds, and at last I, for one, feel like rebelling."

"Rebelling? Oh, Rhoda!"

"Ogden and I had a talk, yesterday, about his being actually forbidden to bring that young friend of his—Charles Rathburne—to the house. A nicer and more gentlemanly young man you couldn't meet if you were to walk from the Battery to Grand Street. And do you know why mother didn't wish him to come here?"

"Why?" faltered Agnes. Poor meek girl, she felt just then like the darkest of conspirators.

"On our account," declared Rhoda, setting her blonde head a little backward and surveying Agnes as if she expected a handsome tribute of sympathetic astonishment. "Yes, your account and mine. Mother as much as told Ogden so. Charles Rathburne's father is in the leather-business or something like that, and father doesn't know much about him, and mother says that nobody of her acquaintance visits his mother. So, as he's good-looking and rather attractive, he's decided to be a quicksand of danger for us. Oh, it's all too irritating! Ogden's heard, lately, that our neighbors here in Bowling-Green have nicknamed this house 'the jail.' I suppose, while our jailers are away, we'll not be allowed a single visitor whatever."

But here Rhoda was mistaken: Mrs. Van Duzer, in her most tranquil and august tone, informed Agnes, on the eve of departure, as to just those guests whom she deemed it advisable, during her absence, to entertain. The list made Rhoda bite her lips in secret vexation; it contained scarcely the name of a single youth whom she did not hold to be ineffably stupid.

The further rules and vetoes which were imposed by these two departing authorities were, some of them, no less stringent than absurd. Ogden, with a reckless laugh, exclaimed, not long after the carriage which bore them to the vessel had rolled off:

"Well, I wonder if mother and father actually think I'm going to bed, every night they're away, at precisely ten o'clock."

Rhoda echoed his laugh.

"Or that I," she said, "am never to walk out alone in the streets."

"But Ogden—Rhoda," struck in Agnes, with a frightened look: "you both received such positive orders, you know."

"Who cares if we did?" cried Ogden, not a little hotly. "We're no longer children; and, even if we were, I think such treatment would be nonsensically severe." Ogden folded his hands behind him, at this point, and began to pace the floor of the apartment with a grand air. "Oh, I've been observing, looking about me," he pursued. "I've noticed how other young people are brought up. We'll all three have to make a stand, sooner or later; there'll have to come a revolution, open and defiant."

"Oh, Ogden!" murmured Agnes.

"One thing," Ogden went on, "I have firmly made up my mind to do—and that is, to learn French, if I'm possessed of brain enough."

"Learn French?" murmured Agnes. "But, Ogden, I thought father told you that, apart from there being no necessity of your knowing the language at all, he seriously objected to your learning it."

"I'm quite well aware that he expressed himself just in that ridiculous way," returned Ogden, rather haughtily. "But there's a charming young Frenchman at school, who has taken some of the mathematical classes while Mr. Folsom is in Boston. His name is Olivier—Pierre Olivier. He's offered to give me lessons. Oh, he's a glorious chap—so good and kind to the boys. He was a boy himself not so very long ago—he's only twentyfive—and he remembers it."

"Do you mean that he will give you lessons at school?" asked Agnes.

She adored Ogden, to the root of her gentle amiable being, and it cast a shade of worriment over her sweet face now as she thought of how sternly his mutiny might be received hereafter.

"No; I mean here."

"Here, in our own house?"

"Yes."

Agnes laid her hand on her brother's arm.

"Oh, father will be sure to hear of it," she pleaded. "And then, think how terribly angry it will make him. Ogden, do give up the idea; promise me you will. I know it's very unjust—it's even most tyrannical—in father, to say that you shall not learn French; but then it almost breaks my heart to think of what he might do, if you deliberately went against his wish like this."

Agnes continued her entreaty; but Ogden, though he heeded it, would not accede to it.

Rhoda eagerly supported him in his new determination; and Agnes, reflecting upon the domestic tempest which might some day gather over her dear young brother's head, would secretly tremble at his rashness.

But her alarm was soon replaced by a very different sort of emotion: Pierre Olivier, during his periodical visits at the house in Bowling-Green, could not fail to meet both of Ogden's sisters. He was an extremely handsome fellow, with dark eyes that shone fascinatingly from an olive-tinted face. It was just the sort of face to be chiefly responsible in a romantic attachment. But Olivier's manner was also the perfection of suavity and grace, while his varied accomplishments made almost every other man of his own age in the provincial atmosphere that he breathed seem, to girls like Agnes and Rhoda, dull and tiresome by contrast. He was penniless except for the salary which he drew from the school where Ogden had met him; he came of a ruined French family, once notable and even distinguished. His mental faculties were all fine; but, morally, he was rather a "flaneur," lacking energy enough to put to brilliant profit the education with which earlier conditions of prosperity had equipped him.

Agnes attracted him, from the first moment that he was presented to her. He had often fancied himself in love before, but he now rapidly realized that every other attachment of his life had been the merest prelude to the present one. Gifted with delightful conversational power, knowing much of the most refined European circles, possessed of a tenor voice which admirably suited the limitation of amateur performance, though it might not have appeared remarkable elsewhere, Olivier was just the man to dazzle and charm a girl for whom his graceful personality offered so much of novelty and surprise.

Rhoda and Ogden saw how matters lay, almost before Agnes herself was fully aware of her own complete infatuation. The brother and the younger sister, one day, made an excited confession to each other of their new and bewildering conviction. Rhoda's eyes were sparkling vivaciously, as she said:

"Oh, Ogden, there isn't the least doubt about it! I thought, three or four days ago, that I might be mistaken. But no; Agnes has lost her heart, for good and all."

"And so has Olivier," returned Ogden, with an oracular nod of the head.

"Has—has he told you anything that makes you believe so?" hurriedly questioned Rhoda.

"He told me he thought Agnes the loveliest girl he had ever seen."

Rhoda broke into a perturbed little trill of laughter.

"Oh, what do you suppose will be the end of it?" she asked, clasping both hands together with tremulous anxiety.

"End of it?" replied Ogden, trying to speak the words phlegmatically, but betraying his secret agitation at the extraordinary turn of affairs. "Why, what is the only natural end, you goosie? He'll ask her to marry him, of course. They always do, in such cases."

"But only reflect, Ogden: mother and father will be back in two weeks or so."

"Well?"

"They will both be wild with anger. You know how they detest all foreigners. Don't you think it would be well for you to warn Monsieur Olivier in time? I mean, you know, before the matter gets too far."

"I'm afraid it has got too far already," said Ogden; "I don't believe anything either you or I could say, Rhoda, would prevent it from taking one course now."

CHAPTER III.

And Ogden was quite right. For Olivier to declare his passion had grown inevitable, and for Agnes to respond by admitting its full return was equally so. There was a sort of engagement, soon, regarding whose existence Ogden and Rhoda were made confidants. It was a very sad and almost a terrified kind of betrothal on Agnes's side. She clearly understood the obstacles that loomed before her, black and menacing. But she loved Olivier well enough to await them with a certain unflinching fortitude.

"We'll all three have to face the music," said Ogden, one day; "when they come home, Agnes, Rhoda and I will stand by you."

"Thanks," said Agnes, with a slight pained smile; "but I would rather take all the blame on myself. I am the one who should do so. I want them to see Pierre first, before they learn that we—we are engaged."

"Mother will look at him through her glasses as if he were something that had strayed from a museum," said Rhoda, mournfully.

"And father," struck in Ogden, "will act as if it would be an exquisite pleasure to show him the door."

This was very much the manner in which, on the afternoon of their arrival in town, Mr. and Mrs. Van Duzer did behave to poor Olivier. It had been pre-arranged that they should find him seated in the parlor when they crossed the threshold of their house. After Agnes had kissed her parents, she quietly presented him.

Olivier did not stay very long, nor had it been intended that he should do so. The returned travelers had a good deal to talk about in the way of events connected with their recent absence from home, but it was soon evident to all three of their children that displeasure was brooding darkly in their spirits. Olivier's accent betrayed him to be a foreigner, even if his swarthy complexion and decidedly French name had not done this with still greater promptness. Mrs. Van Duzer sat nervously fingering at the bonnet-strings that she had lately untied, while her secret indignation, struggling against the requirement of proper courtesy, was manifest in repeated glances toward her eldest daughter. As for Paul Van Duzer, he would probably have addressed some pointed and not over-civil question to Olivier, requiring an answer fraught with direct information about that young gentleman's actual identity, if the latter had not so soon made his almost painfully awkward adieu.

The hall-door had not closed behind him before Mr. Van Duzer's query rang sharply:

"Who is that man?"

His wife looked the same question, while her gaze dwelt on her husband's face, with a sternness quite equal to his own, and then slowly transferred itself to the face of Agnes, following the paternal eyes.

Agnes returned the look calmly. She sat quite still before her parents, with both hands in her lap. Rhoda slipped to her side, leaving Ogden, but the elder sister did not seem to be aware of this act.

"The gentleman, father," said Agnes, "is Monsieur Pierre Olivier. He is a Frenchman."

"A Frenchman?" echoed Mrs. Van Duzer. "What is he doing here? How is it that you all come to know him?"

Ogden spoke now.

"We all come to know him," said Ogden, "because he has been giving me French lessons."

Mr. and Mrs. Van Duzer exchanged a look of consternation.

"Did I not forbid you to take lessons in that language?" asked the former, with clouding brow. His anger was so blended with amazement that it could not yet find full expression. There were few things capable of surprising Mr. Paul Van Duzer more keenly than the insurrection or even the partial insubordination of either of his children. The family-despot is nearly always a flourishing product in just such a social atmosphere as this of New York more than a half-century ago. In all communities where civilization has been of the repressed sort, we find the rule of the parent—which should always exhibit so sweet a commingling of arbitration and love, of decision and tenderness—verging upon unwholesome tyranny.

"Yes, father," answered Ogden, slowly inclining his head; "you did forbid me to learn French. But I thought such an order from you quite unfair and unjust, and I disobeyed it."

Van Duzer sprang to his feet.

"How dared you do so?" he exclaimed.

His wife rose almost at the same moment. She caught her husband's hand and held it tightly, while they both regarded their son.

With all her native austerity, Mrs. Van Duzer, separated for nearly six weeks from Ogden, felt the maternal impulse warm and stir within her. She thought this contumacy something horrible, even unpardonable, in her boy; but the infliction upon him of even a deserved punishment seemed to her at this hour a merciless measure.

"Wait," she said to her husband; "he may explain. Wait, Paul, and let him speak."

The words were low, but Ogden heard them. A slightly bitter smile crossed his handsome young face.

"I have never been allowed to speak," he said, with a high calm voice that did not show a tremor. "I have always been treated as if I were a worthless inferior, who had neither the right nor the power to think for himself on any subject. I wanted to learn French, father, and I told you so. You refused to let me learn it, and I had reached an age when—"

"Not another word, sir!" cried Van Duzer, as he flung away his wife's clasping hand and rushed toward the son who had presumed thus to brave his authority.

But, before he had taken three steps toward Ogden, Agnes had hurried in front of her brother.

"No, father," she exclaimed, "you must not strike Ogden—you must not even dream of punishing him. He acts as he does simply for one reason: he wishes to provoke you against himself, that he may shield me—for the time, at least—against your displeasure."

"Hush, Agnes!" came sharply from Ogden's lips.

But Agnes would not keep silent.

"No, no," she went on; "what I say is true. Ogden did ask Monsieur Olivier to give him lessons in French. It was disobedient in him, I allow. But—"

"You allow that it was disobedient, Agnes?" here broke in her mother, with a tone of haughtiest challenge. "That is certainly a great concession upon your part. You appear to treat

this question as if there were some doubt concerning Ogden's real behavior."

"Oh, I am not treating the question at all," burst forth Agnes, in a voice which made her mother almost wonder if it were her eldest daughter who spoke, so assertive, so emphatic, so wholly uncharacteristic was the answer now given. "I wish merely to tell you both—yes, both, mother and father—that you must save all your harshness, and reproof, and heaven knows what else, for me—for me only—I alone deserve them!"

There was a dead silence of several seconds. With hands outstretched, Agnes still stood before her brother.

His astonishment actually cooled Van Duzer's rage; he scanned his wife's countenance, but her eyes were riveted upon the face of Agnes, with a look of incredulous wonder.

"What does the girl mean?" he questioned.

"Oh, Agnes, you need not have told it yet," Ogden exclaimed.

"No, no, Agnes!" said Rhoda, speaking for the first time and gliding across the room once more to her sister's side.

"But I will tell it—I must tell it," said Agnes.

She caught the hand which Rhoda extended to her; and then, while she retained this hand, as if its contact and pressure might serve as a fortifying stimulus, she proceeded in a clear firm voice:

"I love Monsieur Olivier, and I have promised to marry him. He loves me, and he is a gentleman. I am old enough to choose for myself, and I have chosen. There, it is all told in just those few words. I don't wish to go against your desire, but I beg that you will both see more of him before you condemn him. I am not willful; I have never shown myself so, as you must admit. If I ever seem undutiful or obstinate, it will be because you have forced me to take that course. I love you both—but I love him also. I would not let him speak first, though he wanted to do it. And I preferred not to let you remain deceived a single hour after you had returned home. That is my reason for letting you know everything immediately."

Agnes ended her speech with a faint little quiver in her voice, the first that she had thus far shown. Then she turned and drooped her head on Rhoda's shoulder. As she did so, Rhoda spoke, addressing both her parents impetuously, precipitately:

"Agnes is right when she says Monsieur Olivier is a gentleman. And I do hope you will not oppose her; for she does love him with all her heart, and I'm perfectly certain he'll make her a splendid husband, he is so gentle and kind-hearted."

"This—this is too dreadful!" gasped Mrs. Van Duzer, sinking into the chair she had quitted. And then she addressed her husband in a tone of mingled pleading and agitation:

"It's no use, Paul, to do anything hastily. We must bear the blow as well as we can, and not do our best to—to make it worse than it already is."

A slight laugh came from Paul Van Duzer; he had grown grayishly pale. It is safe to state that, if his daughter had produced some weapon and tried to stab him with it, he could not have felt a greater sense of outrage than he felt now. The passionate emotion that was fleetly surging through his soul alarmed him by its intensity; it made him fear lest he might commit some act which his whole future would regret, and, by exerting upon him this influence, it engendered a certain desperate tranquillity. He had never esteemed himself an overexacting parent; he had brought up his children precisely as he himself had been brought up. It was the "old-school" method, perhaps, of parental government, but he knew of no other which he considered comparable with it in practical force.

He gnawed his lips for a moment, while his eyes, with a really lurid glitter of wrath in them, dwelt upon Agnes's bowed and shrinking figure.

"You shall have just one day—twentyfour hours," he said, huskily, "in which to form your decision. Then you can either marry this foreigner or not. But, if you make up your mind to marry him, you become as dead to all your family as if you were now lying in your coffin."

He was turning toward the door of the room, when the effect of this most cruelly unreasonable speech burst upon him; and it was an effect for which years of uncomplaining subservience on the part of his three children had by no means prepared him; a thunder-clap in a clear sky could not have been more astounding.

It might have pierced with acute conscience-pang a man of less imperious and dictatorial nature; but, for Paul Van Duzer, it wore a hue of the most atrocious aggravation.

Agnes, as might be said, began it. She lifted her head from her sister's shoulder, and, with a flash in her dark eyes that seemed like a sudden fire drying the tears there, she unhesitatingly spoke.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]